

many kind, fun and exciting teachers! . . . Almost every student gets a great score . . . on their tests because we learn so much . . . we don't even notice how hard we are working to learn. . . . I feel lucky to go to a great school."

Emma Higgenbotham writes, "Riverside makes you want to come to school everyday because we have nice people, kind teachers, and we learn a lot of things. . . . We also have kind custodians who work hard to clean our school. I like coming to a clean school everyday."

And, finally, Kallie Konklin captures the overall success of Riverside by writing, "If you are wondering why Riverside is a school of excellence, I think you came to the right person to ask. . . . Our teachers are very kind, caring and patient with our needs and different personalities. . . . Last, but not least, we have Mrs. Engler, our principal. She is the one who keeps everything running smoothly, and deals with all of the politics associated with running a large grade school."

As Kallie and several other pupils noted, much of the credit for Riverside Elementary School's success belongs to its principal, Cathy Engler, and her dedicated teachers. The students and staff at Riverside Elementary understand that, in order to be successful, a school must go beyond achieving academic success; it must also provide a nurturing environment where students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for success in life. All of the faculty, staff, and students at Riverside Elementary should be very proud of their accomplishment.

I congratulate Riverside Elementary in Brainerd, MN, for winning the Award for Excellence in Education and for its exceptional contributions to education in Minnesota.●

HONORING CAROLE PAGONES

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to publicly recognize and honor Carole Pagones on the occasion of her retirement from Main Street Sioux Falls, Inc. Under her extraordinary leadership, Main Street Sioux Falls helped to engineer a dramatic revitalization of the core commercial district in South Dakota's largest city.

When Carole took the helm at Main Street Sioux Falls, first-floor vacancies in downtown buildings were at a discouraging 69 percent, and the downtown area was usually deserted after 5 o'clock. Like so many towns and cities, Sioux Falls struggled to maintain the vitality of the area that was once its heart and soul.

While some merely lamented this situation, Carole energetically set about changing it. During a 12-year stint as the executive director of Main Street Sioux Falls, and later as the organization's development director, she initiated new events to draw people to the area. She worked to enhance the area's appearance to make it more inviting. The historic preservation of building

facades and outdoor dining opportunities are particularly valuable enhancements for the downtown area. And she wielded her personal charm to persuade individual businesses to return to the area.

Today, any visitor to downtown Sioux Falls can immediately sense the wonderful results of Carole's efforts. Numerous shops, restaurants, and other businesses now operate in an area that is once again one of the city's most desirable locations. Statistics tell the same story—under Carole's tenure, the vacancy rate that once stood at nearly three quarters of all first-floor downtown properties has been whittled down to a mere 7 percent.

Besides restoring the vibrancy of the core downtown area, Carole has also helped Sioux Falls prepare for transformational developments that will expand and improve what we have traditionally considered to be "downtown". For example, the Philips-to-the-Falls project will link downtown with the natural amenities of nearby Falls Park. And development is now gaining steam on the "East Bank" of the Big Sioux River, opposite the vibrant area on the west side of the river.

Though Carol's presence at Main Street Sioux Falls will be sorely missed following her retirement, she leaves the organization well prepared to build upon her remarkable record of success. Fortunately, Sioux Falls and the entire State will continue to benefit from Carole's leadership through her membership on the State's Board of Regents and her ongoing participation in many Main Street Sioux Falls events.

On behalf of all South Dakotans, I congratulate Carole Pagones for her outstanding leadership, and I wish her continued successes on all her new challenges and opportunities.●

TRIBUTE TO JESSIE TEHRANCHI

● Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, Jessie Tehranchi was a passionate advocate for improved public transportation and universal health care from my State of Alabama. Jessie dedicated her time to helping others as she worked to advocate on behalf of the issues that shaped her life.

Jessie's passion was personal; diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1987, she spent much of her adult life confined to a wheelchair. Faced with seemingly insurmountable odds, Jessie used her experience to better the lives of many others with similar handicaps. A fixture in transportation activist groups, she spoke across the country on behalf of her causes.

Jessie testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs in 2002 at a Housing and Transportation Subcommittee meeting. Jessie emphasized the need for effective public transportation and cited her own experiences as a person unable to drive. Her testimony was powerful and useful as the Senate

worked on the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

Jessie was optimistic, energetic, and passionate. I am proud of her efforts, and I am grateful for her dedication to this important cause. I know that she will be missed not only by her husband, Jim Tehranchi, and two sons, David and Michael, and her many friends, but by the many people whose lives she touched through her devotion to public transportation.●

TRIBUTE TO MARTHA TSCHETTER

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize Martha Tschetter for her tireless work bringing warmth and kindness to total strangers. Mrs. Tschetter, at the age of 85, has worked tirelessly since 1988 hooking quilts for a Mennonite charity. In November, Martha donated her 3,000th quilt to charity. Martha's contribution to her community does not stop there.

Martha's service to her community did not start eighteen years ago but began many decades ago. Mrs. Tschetter served as a teacher in the Freeman area for the better part of five decades. Martha spent thirty six years as a full time teacher in the Freeman area only to serve another twelve years as a substitute teacher at Freeman Elementary.

Martha is a shining reminder to us all that life does not end at 65. She has never stopped giving of herself to help those in need. Today, I am glad to rise with Martha's friends and family in congratulating her on her continual service to her community.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 6:12 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 1932) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 202(a) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006 (H. Con. Res. 95).

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate: